

TECHNOLOGY PLAN

Cranston Public Library
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Vision

The Cranston Public Library will be able to offer patron access to a wide variety of services both within the library and remotely. These services will include local, national, and government information as well as databases via the Internet, World Wide Web and local area networks. Both patrons and staff will find these systems easy to use and navigate, with fast response times for all systems and networks.

Technology Assessment

1. Overview

The Cranston Public Library is a member of the Cooperating Libraries Automated Network (CLAN). A network of public libraries in Rhode Island that share their computing needs. As such, Cranston is covered by CLAN's "higher-level technology plan" as well as this "individual" technology plan.

2. Hardware

Cranston library system consists of a central library and 5 branch libraries. Cranston completed the conversion from a dumb terminal network to a personal computer network, with the exception of smallest branch library. That library has one dumb terminal. Cranston has two other devices that run through the terminal server: an electronic notification system that calls patrons for reserved materials, and overdues, and the electronic acquisitions system used to send material purchase orders to vendors. Cranston is running 91 personal computers. Twenty personal computers are dedicated to public Internet/World Wide Web access. Twenty-one personal computers are dedicated to the online catalog. Fourteen personal computers are dedicated to non-network applications (word processing, spreadsheets, etc.) Thirty-one personal computers are dedicated to staff use. All of the staff personal computers have Internet access. Cranston also has a fourteen bay network CD Server, and a network laser printer.

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2. Telecommunications

Cranston's sub-network is communicating on three 384K leased lines, one 144K leased line, and one T1 leased line. The sub-network equipment includes 1 terminal server, 5 24T switches, 2 16T switches, and 5 routers.

3. Internal Cabling

Cranston's terminal network uses category 3 cabling. The personal computers with Internet access use 3Com network interface cards and category 5 twisted pair cabling.

4. Software/Online Databases

As a part of CLAN, Cranston is standardized on TCP/IP protocol for wide area telecommunications. For personal computers Cranston uses the Microsoft IP stack provided with Windows 9X operating system.

The current reference databases on CD-ROM include the American Business Disc, Grolier's Encyclopedia, Facts on File Indians, Peoples of the Desert, Peoples of the Plains, Math Blaster 1st grade, African-American History and Culture, All About Elections, Reading Blaster 1st grade, Founding Fathers, Encarta Africana 2000, Hammond Atlas of the World, and the Chemistry Set. The public access computers offer wide variety of software, including: Microsoft Office 97, New PrintShop Deluxe, and Claris Works.

The current online databases include the American Business Disc, Title source II, EbscoHost, and eLibraryPlus.

5. Staffing

Cranston has 31 full time staff, and between 80 and 100 part time staff depending on annual appropriations. No single staff member is dedicated exclusively to library technology. The Technical Services/Systems Coordinator coordinates library technology on a part time bases.

6. Professional Development

The library has adopted a Long-Range Plan 1998-2002. Specific strategies and target dates for implementation which support our technology plan include;

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A. Plan and implement a program of general and specific training activities for staff with attention to core competencies. The library has developed and published a Policy and Procedures Manual to be used as a general reference and training guide. Each new staff member receives two hours of one-on-one training.

B. Conduct at least two system wide staff meetings per year. The Library has regularly scheduled system-wide staff meetings twice a year.

C. Pursue development of joint training activities with other libraries and with other appropriate organizations.

D. Develop programs on use and evaluation of technology for children and adults. The library has formed a committee to investigate Internet monitoring.

E. Establish a staff committee to monitor and evaluate new trends in information delivery.

During the summer and fall of 1997 all staff completed introductory Internet training conducted in small group sessions by library staff.

During the fall of 2001 eleven staff are enrolled in the "Word" training program of the State Training and Development Department.

7. Contracts

All Cranston technology contracts are through CLAN. These include contracts with epixtech Library Services, Verizon, Atrion, Conversent, Deltec, Inc. Cranston does not maintain any contracts on terminals or personal computers beyond manufacture's/vendor's warranty.

8. Budget

The Cranston Public Library Board of Trustees through the annual budget process and through long-range planning activities demonstrates their commitment to the maintenance and expansion of the library's technology plan.

To date this commitment has been demonstrated through Board purchase approval of a new telephone system, allocation of funds for staff training activities, adjusting library hours to accommodate training sessions, authorization to begin systemwide replacement of "dumb" terminals with personal computers and an annual review of technology accomplishments and action plans for the coming year.

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Goals, Objectives, Activities

Goals

Increase access to all forms of information. Make information access easier and faster.

Objectives

Cranston's plan is to phase out the existing terminals. Replacing them with personal computers, allowing increased access to the Internet and World Wide Web. This requires re-cabling each building with category 5 cable. The 2 smallest branch libraries were re-cabled in the spring of 1998. Terminals and terminal servers were replaced in the summer of 1998. One medium sized branch library was re-cabled in the winter of 1999, and terminals and terminal servers were replaced in the spring/summer of 1999. The central library and the other medium sized branch library were re-cabled in the winter of 2000, and the terminals were replaced in the spring/summer of 2000. This project started in the spring of 1997, and is almost complete.

Initially, each personal computer was connected to the ethernet hub. The hubs were replaced with more efficient switches in 2000. This is covered by CLAN's higher level technology plan.

Telephone reference services was moved from the current reference desk to a new Telephone Reference Office in the summer of 1998. The current telephone system was replaced with a new system offering greater capacity and flexibility. The new telephone system, and the Telephone Reference Office has increased patrons access to information, and allowed patrons in the library greater access to the reference staff.

To improve customer response time and provide greater cost efficiency an electronic notification system was linked to the new phone system in the summer of 1998. The electronic notification system is a great success.

A homework center was created in the children's library of the central library. This homework center has 5 personal computers and a 14 disc CD-ROM server. The center was fully functional in the spring of 2001.

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The current 56K lease telephone lines was upgraded to a T-1 line. Traffic on the lines will be compartmentalized so that "library traffic" (circulation, cataloging, acquisitions) will be separate from "Internet traffic" (public access catalog, World Wide Web, FTP, etc.). This will be accomplished in part by providing each library with it's own Internet Service Provider, eliminating the current configuration where all libraries' internet access is through a single net connect server in Providence. This is covered by CLAN's higher level technology plan.

Evaluation

Objectives will be evaluated by noting if proposed cabling/personal computers are in place by the time targeted.